

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1. - 15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) A method of accessing an interior of a heart chamber of a heart, comprising ~~the steps of:~~

~~maintaining beating of the heart; and~~

inserting a port into ~~[[in]]~~ a chamber wall of the heart chamber while the heart remains beating, the port having a lumen therethrough for accessing the interior of the heart chamber from exterior of the heart chamber.

17. (currently amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the inserting step comprises securing the port in an atrial wall to access the ~~[[an]]~~ interior of the heart.

Claims 18. - 26. (cancelled)

27. (currently amended) A method as in claim 16, further comprising:

inserting a stapling device through the lumen of the port; and

positioning staples from the stapling device into at least a portion of a [[the]] mitral valve annulus ~~of a damaged heart valve~~ to reduce a length of the portion of the mitral valve annulus.

28. (original) The method according to claim 27, further comprising the step of connecting the staples together with a strip of material.

29. (original) The method according to claim 27, wherein the positioning step comprises placing staples into the posterior mitral annulus.